Title: The Representation of Orphans and their upbringing in Victorian Novel

Name of Scholar: Kyamelia Bairagya

Supervisor: Professor Debarati Bandyopadhyay

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Synopsis

In the Victorian period we get a large number of fictional works dealing with orphans. The representation of Victorian orphans in various literary works highlights the anxiety created by the presence of these figures within the society. Novels featuring orphan characters are Dickens's *Oliver Twist* (1837-8) , *Nicholas Nickleby* (1838-39) , *Martin Chuzzlewit* (1843-4), *David Copperfield* (1849-50) , *Bleak House* (1852-53) ,*Great Expectations* (1860-61) ; Charlotte Bronte's *Jane Eyre* (1847);Emily Bronte's *Wuthering Heights (*1847*)* Thackeray's *Vanity Fair (*1847-8*);* George Eliot's *Adam Bede* (1859) , *Silas Marner* (1861), *Daniel Deronda*(1874-76);Collins's *No Name* (1862) ; Hardy's *Jude the Obscure* (1895); Kingsley's *The Water Babies* (1863*)* etc .Most of the orphans present in these novels can be read as unfamiliar and strange figures lying outside the dominant narrative of domesticity. These orphans are adopted by any family, or placed under the control of the Board of Guardians to be raised in orphanages or workhouses . I would like to explore orphan characters and focus on the representation of their upbringing in domestic as well as the non domestic spheres in the following novels Dickens's *Oliver Twist , David Copperfield , Bleak House , Dombey and Son , Hard Times , Great Expectations;* Charlotte Bronte's *Jane Eyre ;* Emily Bronte's *Wuthering Heights ;*Kingsley's *The Water Babies;* and Hardy's *Jude The Obscure* of the Victorian age.

Most of the existing studies primarily focus on the orphan protagonists of the novels and do not discuss much about other orphan characters present in them. It can also be seen that critics have not talked in extensive details about the nature of upbringing of these orphans as shown in the fictional works of the Victorian age. In the course of my study I will focus on all the orphan characters, protagonists and non protagonists in the above mentioned nine novels of the period. I will also try to analyse the role of family, society and the state or government in the upbringing of these orphans as represented in the nine novels I have chosen for this purpose. The government intervenes in this matter through orphanages, boarding schools and workhouses. These places appear to be no utopias for the orphans and are represented as nightmarish prison like spaces which aims at monitoring its inhabitants through repression but in its act of doing so it often produces hatred and criminal tendencies among them as shown in certain orphan characters of the above novels of my study.

The problem perhaps was that the Victorian society being a structured society found it difficult to place and classify the destitute classless figure in its reality as well as in its

imagination. The claustrophobic atmospheres of the domestic as well as non domestic spheres are shown as giving birth to rebellious figures like Jane, Heathcliff, and Estella. The orphanages and the Board imagine the orphans as prisoners and confine them within the repressing atmosphere like prisoners. The orphans are shown as burdens even for the families which adopt them. Thus in *Bleak House* a person considers it easier to dispose off'' an ownerless dog than an orphaned child. Ín reality it was difficult to dispose an orphan because the presence of this figure within the society questioned the progressive notions of the society. Their presence in considerably large numbers challenged the dominant discourse of progress and threatened it from within. Thus the orphans stood out as óthers' threatening the society. They could not be allowed to encroach into the 'çivilized' space. Neither could they be 'disposed off'. In such a crisis the orphanages and workhouses seemed a solution. But these places as represented in few novels are devices for the subjugation of this vulnerable section of the population whose nature of existence is somewhat deviant to that of the established norm, though with no fault of their own. Thus it can be said that the orphanages and workhouses turn out to be 'heterotopias of deviation' like prisons and asylums, bringing up their inhabitants by repressing their personality. This idea can be extended to the domestic sphere as well. For instance the inhuman treatment received by Heathcliff in the world of *Wuthering Heights* which turns him into a criminal. The position of Hareton in *Wuthering Heights*, Tom and Louisa in *Hard Times*, David in *David Copperfield* can be compared as all of them are reduced to orphan like figures in their own household in spite of having one of their parents alive. Even in *Bleak House* the orphans are subjugated in the course of their upbringing. *The Water Babies* and *Jude the Obscure* are two different kinds of novels and have to be treated separately. Kingsley creates two worlds and surprisingly in land and in water Tom is always watched. Everywhere he goes, he is monitored in some way. Thus the fictional representation of upbringing of the orphans in the above nine novels of the Victorian age brings out the role played by families and other social institutions in their life.

According to Laura Peters the Victorian culture perceived the orphans as a promise and also as a threat to its stability. She claims that in the Victorian culture if the orphans needed a family, the family needed orphans as a scapegoat in order to reaffirm itself. Most of the existing studies primarily focus on the orphan protagonists of the novels and do not discuss much about other orphan characters present in them. It can also be seen that critics have not talked in extensive details about the nature of upbringing of these orphans as shown in the fictional works of the Victorian age. In the course of my study I will focus on all the orphan characters, protagonists and non protagonists in the above mentioned nine novels of the period. I will also try to analyse the role of family, society and the state or government in the upbringing of these orphans as represented in the nine novels I have chosen for this purpose. The government intervenes in this matter through orphanages, boarding schools and workhouses. These places appear to be no utopias for the orphans and are represented as nightmarish prison like spaces which aims at monitoring its inhabitants through repression but in its act of doing so it often produces hatred and criminal tendencies among them as shown in certain orphan characters of the above novels of my study.

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